

One of the things I appreciate about nursing as a career is that there are many avenues of nursing to choose from and the ability to find one that works best is always a possibility. I find public health nursing extremely gratifying and am happy that I made the choice to pursue this career.



Kim Comerzan, RN, BSN

Why did you choose public health nursing?

I have always had a desire to teach and help individuals take charge of their own health and make informed choices. When I completed my community health clinical rotation as part of my BSN education I saw public health as the perfect opportunity to incorporate my love of teaching into my work in nursing.

Please provide a brief description of what you do.

I am currently the Health Officer/Director of a local health department, which has taken me out of direct patient care but has allowed the ability and authority to make an impact on policy and regulation to better the health of the community where I live and work.

Please describe your role in the health care community where you practice nursing.

I have worked as a PHN, PHN coordinator of programs, manager of staff and programs and finally as the Director of the department. My history as a public health nurse has been in a variety of public health programs providing services such as immunization, communicable disease investigation, HIV/STI screening and treatment, patient counseling and advocating on behalf of the underprivileged and underserved in my community. By working in the many areas of public health I have gained a tremendous amount of knowledge about this community, its partnerships and administration at the local, state and federal level, which has laid the foundation for my position today.

What do you consider to be the most challenging part of public health nursing?

Although there are multiple challenges in public health I have to say that funding continues to be a struggle related to service provision. Facing budget constraints forces prioritizing services and clients who are eligible for services and sometimes this poses problems in provision of services to populations in need.

What do you consider to be the most rewarding?

It is most rewarding when we are able to play a role in making changes to better the health of a community such as working with pregnant women and infants related to prenatal care and social support which improves pregnancy outcomes and positively impacts infant mortality. This is just one example of quality public health.

What advice do you have for nursing graduates who are considering public health nursing as a career?

I would recommend either acquiring an internship in a public health department or offering to volunteer in public health. This way, nurses are able to glean a full picture of what public health nursing is about. The experience should help nurses make the decision if public health nursing is the right choice for them. It helps if they enjoy educating since so much of public health nursing involves teaching.